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"DIANA" BY FALGUIÈRE—A CLEVER STATUE

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IN this "Diana" by Falguière we have a striking example of a noble subject trivialized by a great artist—through a lowering of his moral attitude towards things in life.

Falguière was one of the greatest sculptors of modern times—if greatness is to be determined by one statue alone. His Saint Vincent de Paul in the Panthéon of Paris—one of his earliest works—is one of the noblest pieces of sculpture created since the Renaissance.

But it seems to have been an accident. For he never produced anything equal to that—principally because he was a man of weak moral force. However fine may have been his ideals in his youth, as he grew older he lost grip on himself and finally acquired a reputation among the inner circle of the Paris world of art that was not enviable.

Falguière is a fine example of the artist with a competent brain but an earthy soul. He was selfish, intellectual, skilful, clever. But beyond the gratification of his vanity and physical hungers—purposeless. A waif on the sea of life, an Art for art's sakeist à l'outrance and so contemptuous of society that he robbed mankind of masterpieces he might have created, had he been properly attuned to the highest interests of the race.

Towards the end of his life he exposed in the Paris Salon a plaster group of two life-size nude women on their knees scrapping and pulling each other's hair, a skilful but disgusting creation. Paris felt genuinely disheartened that so fine a brain should have become so demented, and said so. But the following year, he came before the public again with the brilliant "Diana" of which we give an illustration on page 123, and "tout Paris" said: "Ah! our genius has come back!" and he was proclaimed still one of the glories of France. It was his last important work.

This statue falls short of being great and remains merely clever. Why?

Because, in spite of its brilliancy it remains an earth-earthy work, with a realism of a mechanical kind. Fundamentally it is not true. Because it is not the statue of a *goddess* and therefore does not express Diana the "Divine Huntress."

Nobody can "construct" a human figure—draw it—better than this figure shows. It has an astonishing truth of movement, the most difficult technical problem to overcome in sculpture. Hence all the material truths are there, and carried out with a cleverness of surface texture-manipulation that cannot be surpassed, one which was the despair of the young fellows in Paris—such as were in search of clever "*chic technique*."

But what about the spiritual truths? For a Diana the body is too plump. One cannot imagine her being the fleet-footed huntress Homer describes. Also, she is lacking in youthfulness and refinement of forms. Hence her body is not what we should expect in a Diana. It is merely a body of a naked professional model, posing with a bow in a studied pose, and correctly copied, accentuating—not femininity, but female-inity. Therefore it is not Nudity but Nakedness.

And so, while not at all indecent, the statue does lack chastity. Now Diana was the Greek incarnation of chastity.

But worst of all, instead of neutralizing the fleshiness of the body—by poetizing, spiritualizing at least the head—by trying to imagine what the Diana of Olympus might or ought to have looked like, and making the head at least classic in feeling and dress, he calmly copied the head and face of his model, the truculent, somewhat brutal face, of a woman evidently a little the worse for wear. Hence she is coarse, not exquisite; a fleshy invitation to the material and not a spiritual exaltation to the poetic.

It is an example of a noble subject conceived on a low plane. Therefore the work is a half-failure—because it does not *express* adequately that which it is supposed to express—the chaste, pure, exquisite hunting Goddess of Olympus! And no amount of technical cleverness can ever compensate for inadequacy or untruthfulness of expression of that which a work is supposed to express. And when the mechanically perfect work on this statue was done, having never thought of Homer's Artemis—he dubbed her "Diana" and insulted the Olympian gods with a smart bit of Falguière charlatanism.

But it remains the *cleverest* piece of modern French sculpture, having all the chic, the touch of cynical flippancy and rabelaisian *gauloiserie* to be expected from a devotee of Boulevardian hedonism.

Here is a fine proof that merely material beauty is not sufficient to lift a work of art into the highest class. The lines of the body, most of the forms and the composition, are all physically beautiful. But the face and spirit are not beautiful. They are carnal, hence eternally disappointing. And this it is which puts it in the class of the merely clever works, and prevents it from being truly great.

This will shock the devotees of the Baudelairean philosophy that in art "Genius pardons everything!", that an artist need only be "clever" to be entitled to violate those finer conventions of society which are always working for the best interests of mankind. But the sooner the artists learn that the truest friends of art, deep down, despise the artist when he abdicates his rôle of moral leadership, the better for both the artist and the world of art.

"DANUBIAN PEASANT" BY VIDAL

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HERE is a statue that should stir the cockles of the heart of that amusing charlatan and song-and-dance self-advertising critic and novel writer

George Moore, who has again—in the *Atlantic* of August—lucubrated his delicious bunco-gospel—"Art is dead."



"DIANA" BY FALGUIÈRE